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This report by a committee appointed to review the treatment of minority groups in social science textbooks presents a series of criteria to be applied to the production and selection of these books. It is recommended that material on minorities should be included when relevant to a subject. Treatment of minorities should be accurate, complete, and realistic. A sample checklist is offered for use by school personnel involved in textbook selection, and a selected bibliography is included. (NH)

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PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Guidelines for Textbook Selection

The TREATMENT of MINORITIES

1967

UD 007 209

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TREATMENT OF MINORITIES IN SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTBOOKS

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Prepared by the Division of Social Studies—Intergroup Education

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FOREWORD

In 1963 the Superintendent of Public Instruction appointed a committee to review the treatment of minority groups in social science textbooks used in the public schools of Pennsylvania. Action stemmed from the Department's concern about implicit discrimination in published materials used by students.

This document is a report of that committee. Its purpose is to alert school districts to possible biased treatments and to seek the cooperation of publishers in producing more realistic textbooks. By using the set of guidelines compiled by the committee, school personnel can help to insure that the books they choose present a balanced, factual account of the minority groups in our society and lead students to an unbiased understanding of all groups.

The problem dealt with here has been given increased national attention since publication of this pamphlet in 1964. The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association have sponsored national conferences with this focus. The demand for more balanced materials is beginning to be recognized by publishers.

In re-issuing this publication with an up-dated and expanded bibliography, the Department is hopeful that Pennsylvania educators will renew their efforts to select classroom materials which respect and reflect our racial, religious and ethnic diversity.

INTRODUCTION

Prejudice manifests itself in many ways, individually and collectively. Sometimes these ways are overt—as in the case of inflammatory expressions of individual prejudice, or in instances of de facto social and economic discrimination on the basis of race, creed or national origin. While these are the more obvious examples, there are individuals who suffer discrimination because of social, political and economic groupings. In fact, discrimination almost always exists wherever an individual or small group does not conform to the dominant pattern of the community as a whole; this is the essence of prejudice, against which all of us must be constantly on guard.

Sometimes the manifestations of prejudice are less overt—as in the case of an individual's assignment of simple causes to complex events, and impatience with the quest for truth; or, collectively, in the tendency of social science textbooks of every nation (including our own) to record the actions of that nation historically as always right, to appraise that nation's social and economic institutions in the most favorable light, and to give something less than a balanced treatment to minority groups.

The very fact that this special committee was appointed is a reflection of the growing maturity of American society, its growing awareness of the problems of minority groups, and its growing determination to help solve them.

The members of this committee believe that diversity in unity is beginning to emerge as an American consensus. We are approaching a degree of national maturity in which our long-held central theme of the dignity and worth of the human individual can embrace the concept that objective consideration of the different ideas, the different view, the different heritage and experience can bring a virility and strength to the nation's intellectual and moral fiber that can come in no other way. This is a hopeful harbinger for the future.

It was manifestly impossible for the members of the committee to review, carefully and critically, the hundreds of social science textbooks which are being or might be used in the schools of Pennsylvania. The committee made use of such studies as were already available and which are listed in the bibliography. The committee has provided a set of criteria and commentary which we hope will be helpful to authors, teachers, publishers and administrators as a guide in the preparation and selection of textbooks from the standpoint of appropriate treatment of minority groups.

The members of the committee are aware that many instructional aids are available to supplement textbooks and believe that these materials should be subjected to the same scrutiny as textbooks. In the teaching of controversial issues, materials reflecting a wide range of opinions may properly be used. However, since textbooks are major teaching and learning tools, they inevitably play an important role in shaping attitudes of children. Because of this the committee urges that school boards and administrators seek the advice of competent persons, including teachers who will be using the books, in the screening and selection of texts.

In addition to commending use of these criteria in evaluating textbooks, the committee urges teachers and administrators to inform publishers of the need for balanced treatment of minority groups wherever mention of such groups is appropriate. Furthermore, it strongly recommends that publishers of textbooks make an effort to meet the standards outlined by this guide.

The committee also expresses its hope that competent researchers will direct their attention to the conduct of pertinent studies and the preparation of authoritative histories of minority groups, and make the results available to publishers.

Section I—GUIDELINES FOR THE PRODUCTION AND SELECTION OF TEXTBOOKS

I. *If material on minorities is important to the consideration of the subject, it should be presented. The problem of minority groups is not necessarily involved in all aspects of social studies instruction and should not be artificially injected.*

A. Discussion of minorities in American society should certainly be included in Problems of Democracy and Sociology courses.

B. Textbooks in American history should include the contributions of minority groups to our developing cultural scene.

C. Pennsylvania has historically been a haven for dissenters and a study of the many cultural, ethnic and religious groups still in existence would be extremely profitable.

II. *The treatment of minorities should reflect a respect for personal and cultural differences and the dignity of the individual.*

A. It should develop the concept of a pluralistic society.

B. It should show cultural diversity in both textual and illustrative material, recognizing that merely altering illustrations does not constitute a balanced treatment.

C. It gives attention to the holidays, festivals and religious observances of various groups.

III. *Information relative to minorities should be accurate and complete.*

A. Generalizations should be supported by substantiating data and pertinent illustrations.

B. Distinction should be made between fact and opinion.

C. Presentations should not perpetuate stereotypes, name-calling and outmoded concepts.

D. Distortion should be avoided.

E. Illustrations and examples should provide a balanced picture.

F. Treatment should emphasize both positive and negative aspects of minority groups.

IV. *All aspects of a subject should be treated adequately.*

A. The focus on contemporary events and ideas should include relevant events and ideas from the past.

B. Varied points of view should be presented.

V. *The treatment of minorities should be frank, mature and realistic.*

A. Controversial and unpleasant matters should not be avoided but should be dealt with in proper perspective and proportion.

B. Treatment should be factual and realistic.

C. It should come to grips with issues and problems.

Section II—APPLYING GUIDELINES TO THE SELECTION OF TEXTBOOKS

In applying the foregoing guidelines, a set of specific criteria may be useful to those charged with the responsibility of choosing textbooks as they analyze materials. Members of a committee, composed of teachers, supervisors and administrators would record their reactions on the checklist form. The group could then summarize and use these reactions as a basis for discussion and elimination in the selection process. A suggested checklist is shown on the following page.

Title of Book _____

Author _____

Publisher _____ Date _____

_____
Name of Evaluator

	S*	A	U	NP	Page References
1. Includes materials on minorities where relevant					
2. Reflects respect for personal and cultural differences and the worth and importance of the individual					
3. Offers factual, realistic, mature treatment					
4. Gives balanced treatment of past and present					
5. Presents accurate, pertinent information					
6. Comes to grips with issues and problems					
7. Presents varied points of view					
8. Develops concepts of pluralistic society					
9. Shows cultural diversity in illustrative materials					
10. Includes cultural diversity in text material					
11. Emphasizes both positive and negative aspects					
12. Avoids distortion and bias					
13. Avoids use of name-calling or emotionally charged words					
14. Supports generalizations with the specific and the concrete					
15. Avoids stereotyping					
16. Aids in building positive attitudes and understandings					
17. Distinguishes between fact and opinion					
18. Gives attention to holidays, festivals, religious observances of various minority groups					
19.					
20.					

* S—Superior A—Acceptable U—Unacceptable NP—Not Pertinent

Summary or General Estimate	*Superior*	*Acceptable*	*Unacceptable*

Special Comments:

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